

SCHOOLS FORUM
MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2016

PRESENT:

Primary School Headteachers: Mrs S Randle, Mrs J Conway (Chair), Mrs M Carlton and Mrs J Rea

Primary School Governors: Mrs S Symington, Mrs J Gair and Mr B Winter

Secondary School Governor: Mr J Thompson

Academy Representative: Mrs M O'Connor

Pupil Referral Unit Representative: Ms L Chilton

Special School Representative: Mr P Ewart

LA Representative: Cllr C Clark

Trade Union Representative: Mr L Russell

Officials: Mr D New – Senior Finance Manager
Ms D McConnell – Head of Schools and SEN
Mrs E Barrett – Secretary to the Schools Forum

Also in attendance: Mrs J Mills, Mrs J Harvey and Mrs G Burnett.

1. **EVACUATION PROCEDURES**

Members noted the evacuations procedures to be used to exit the building in an emergency.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of J Bailey, J Humphreys, B Atkinson, C Hammill and S White.

3. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Members were invited to declare any personal or business interests they may have in any item included on the agenda.

Mrs S Symington and Mrs J Gair declared an interest in any discussion around the growth fund for St John the Baptist CE Primary School.

4. **MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING 8 DECEMBER 2015**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2015 be approved as a true record.

5. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

6. **HIGH NEEDS REVIEW UPDATE**

S Symington referred to the circulated minutes from the High Needs Sub Group

meeting held on 8 January 2016. It was explained that there had been a number of meetings held to populate a risk register and subsequent action plan relating to high needs funding. The project plan was on target however the outcome of the spending review from the Government would be needed to move some actions forward.

J Harvey explained that a questionnaire had been sent to Schools at the end of December 2015 with the high level findings noted on the summary report that had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was disappointing that there had been a low level of responses and none received from FE however all Special Schools had sent their feedback. A detailed analysis of the responses was underway with any suggestions for improvement welcomed.

M O'Connor joined the meeting.

It was explained that there were interim arrangements for the following financial year for top up funding and this had been well received by SENCo's.

Provision Guidance

J Mills and G Burnett tabled Provision Guidance documents and an Audit Band Matrix for member's perusal. The Audit Band Matrix showed the DfE four categories of need and priority bandings. This linked to the four colour coded Provision Guidance documents which outlined the Audit Band descriptors across the four needs. It was agreed that the old Audit Band descriptors were difficult to band children correctly as children could have more than one need. The new system allowed differentiation within each band which was linked to the funds allocated.

Primary needs would be highlighted on the plan as there may be more than one of the four needs applicable. It was noted that this was a clearer route for SENCo's with regards to support within School for each need before top up funding was applied for.

Further work was underway around the funding that would be attached to the bands. April 2016 was the start of the new process with any new requests and reviews from this point applied through the new banding system. It was important to note that funding would be very tight moving forward for High Needs and this needed to be understood by all stakeholders.

Further work needed to be done around the notional SEN budget and how this was managed in Schools. SEN funding needed to be discussed at budget setting particularly as the first £6,000 was paid by Schools for support.

RESOLVED that members note the new Provision Guidance and Audit Band Matrix.

G Burnett, J Harvey and J Mills withdrew from the meeting.

7. COUNCILS MTFP UPDATE

D New referred to the previously circulated Medium Term Financial Plan report which had been to Cabinet on 21 January 2016.. The settlement was lower than expected as there had been a further reduction in the Government's funding from the anticipated £15 million to £21 million. This equated to a total reduction in Government funding by 2019/20 of £73 million.

- The Big Picture Review Programme had made considerable cost savings including a senior management restructure to reduce costs. As further cost savings needed to be made there would be a move from universal services to more services targeted to areas of most need
- There would be an some impact on Schools from April 2016 with the move to a National Living Wage;

- A 2% levy would be applied through Council Tax to alleviate some of the pressures on the Adult Social Care sector;
- The Education Support Grant (ESG) had been reduced by £200,000 in 2016/17 and anticipated to continue to diminish in the future;
- In the short term reserves would be used to manage the change in funding;
- The Government had announced a move to a 100% business rate retention model with additional responsibilities given to the LA.

8. SCHOOL BUDGET MONITORING 2015/16

D New referred to the previously circulated School Budget Monitoring report for 2015/16. The following was noted:

- There is a projected deficit of £370,032 at the end of the financial year with Appendix 1 highlighting the variances;
- There had been an overspend of £567,000 which related to the increased numbers of children taking up the disadvantaged 2 year old offer and the 3 and 4 year old provision which was not funded. The model had moved to participation and the LA was funded on actual numbers through census data. This however did not reflect the changes within the School term with an increased take up after census date;
- An underspend was noted in contingencies which had not been utilized;
- An overspend in top ups particularly with regards to out of Borough provision;
- This was the first time that a deficit budget had been projected and the management of this was covered in the Schools Budget for 2016/17.

RESOLVED that members note the report.

9. SCHOOLS BUDGET 2016/17

D New outlined the circulated paper on Schools Budget 2016/17 based on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement. The following was highlighted:

- The settlement was received on 17 December 2015 with pressures on growth and the deficit from 2015/16. The budget as presented was a balanced position whilst being realistic there was little room for manoeuvre and would require robust management;
- **DSG Allocation** – overall this was £148.307 million compared to £144.5 million for 2014/15 excluding the 2 year funding.
- **Schools Block** - £4,481 was the allocation per pupil which was similar to 2015/16. There was an overall 1.5% increase in pupil numbers including those in the two Free Schools;
- **Early Years Block** – the funding for 3 and 4 year olds was the same as 2015/16 at £3,634 pp which equated to £7.323 million plus a supplement of £300 per pupil premium child which was an additional £246,000;
- **Disadvantaged 2 Year olds** – this funding will be adjusted with data from the January 2016 census with further allocations updated for January 2017 information;
- **High Needs Block** - £21.309 million was allocated and includes top ups, this showed an increase of £317,000 from 2015/16. This covered an additional 5 places at Ash Trees Academy to be sited on Rievaulx Avenue however the original business case had been to fund an additional 26 places which created a pressure on the current budget as 21 places were not funded by the DfE;
- There had been a loss of £43,000 in the budget relating to a Post 16 move from residency to location funding basis;
- An increase of £340,000 was the LA share of additional national top up funding;
- **Schools Block Spend** – the report showed comparisons with 2015/16 unit values and 2016/17 proposed values. AWPU showed no changes with an additional £1.2 million added as Primary numbers had increased, a small

increase was added for Secondary at £502,000 at Key Stage 3 with a reduction in funding at Key Stage 4 of £1.016 million due to falling rolls. The total increase was £1.327 million;

- Pupils in Additional Resource Provision (ARP) were funded through the High Needs Block;
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) was maintained at minus 1.5%;
- The increase in NI and Pensions contributions was not reflected in the funding;
- The notional SEN budget was the same as 2015/16 at £10.156 million.
Members questioned if this could be highlighted clearly on individual Schools budgets. D New confirmed this could be raised with the School Bursary department to ensure it was explicit in the budget commentary;
- **Growth Fund** – there were increased pressures on School places with capital investment now underway as a trend rather than a blip across the Primary sector to create an additional 945 places. New admission data showed this trend from with 150 additional places required September 2016;
- Funding was allocated through previous census data and did not reflect the additional 150 places required therefore the LA needed to set aside funds to cover this growth at a cost of £310,000. There are existing commitments relating to this academic years temporary PAN increases (up to £250k). Two existing Schools in Ingleby Barwick were also expanding which had been funded at an additional £90,000. It was proposed to set aside £650,000 for growth;
- *Members questioned how the 7 named Primary Schools had been identified for growth as the majority were faith Schools. There were issues with capacity in faith Schools in the Secondary sector.* It was explained that this project had been undertaken by officers not present and answers could not be given today.

D New

Cllr Clark withdrew from the meeting.

- *Members questioned the surplus places at some Ingleby Barwick Schools and the impact on those Schools in relation to staffing.* It was explained that these Schools had been funded through the October census and the issue would be the following academic year. It was discussed what the long term plan for Ingleby Barwick Schools would be;
- It was explained that last year there had been an emergency situation in the Primary Admissions round however this would have knock on effect for the following 6 years, an Admissions feedback was underway with regards to zones and PAN's. It was agreed that Martin Gray, Assistant Director be invited to attend the next Schools Forum meeting to discuss the Primary Growth programme;
- No new capital project commitments can be charged to the central Schools budget;
- Central items are unchanged;
- £1.686 million would be transferred to the High Needs Block;
- **Early Years Spend** – the EYPP would continue to be funded by LA's at 53p per eligible pupil. PVI's and Academies are funded on the actual pupil count for 3 and 4 year olds. Schools are funded on the previous year data with retrospective adjustments made.
- Disadvantaged 2 year olds were funded on participation. The hourly rate will be maintained at £4.77 per eligible pupil;
- **High Needs Spend** – previously non recurring funds had been used to support the High Needs budget for 2015/16. There were no additional non recurring funds to draw for 2016/17. There was an assumption that the number of top ups would remain static and only change for new cases. There was additional funding pressures as mentioned for Ash Trees Academy and a tighter provision for contingencies.
- Out of Borough provision needed reviewing. This was in line with the NE12 regional contract to cap provision rates and an anticipation that there would be reductions in charges to the LA;
- **Proposed School Budget** - £370,000 overspend to be built into the 2016/17

D New
Clerk

budget with updates provided throughout the year. Pupil Premium funding was over £10 million with rates maintained. *Members raised an issue re communication from the LA Free School Meal department*, this would be followed up by D New.

P Ewart withdrew from the meeting

- **Arrangements 2017/18** – the Government were moving to a National Funding Formula for all Schools with a consultation due to take place. The role of the LA will diminish along with statutory roles including Schools Forum.
- **RESOLVED:**
 - a) to note the 2016/17 DSG settlement;
 - b) to support the funding formula and growth fund proposals;
 - c) to support the cessation of the allocation for CERA;
 - d) to agree the proposed central spends and associated budget for 2016/17 on Schools and EY blocks;
 - e) to support the hourly rate of £4.77 for the extended 2 year old provision;
 - f) to note the position on High Needs spends;
 - g) to agree the recovery of the expected carry forward overspend balance of £370,000;
 - h) to note the challenging budget position and any overspend from 2016/17 will be met from the following years DSG allocation;
 - i) to note the position on Pupil Premium.

10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no further items of business to discuss.

11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting would be held at 1:30pm on Tuesday 3 May 2016 at The Education Centre in Stockton Sixth Form College.